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SUBJECT: MAOIST STATEMENT THREATENS TOURISM INDUSTRY

Maoists Threaten Tourism Industry

1. (SBU) For the first time, a leader of Nepal's Maoist insurgency has issued explicit threats against Nepal's tourism industry. Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai issued the statement March 15. (Text of statement follows as paragraph 4.) The statement called for the cadres to "smash" hotels and travel businesses owned by prominent Nepalese. It warned tourists about the danger of being caught in the crossfire, and advised foreign travelers to take "precautionary measures" and not to visit Nepal during the upcoming general strike called by the Maoists for April 2-6. Bhattarai's statement was the fourth Maoist press release in a week.

EAC Met

2. (SBU) EAC met March 18 to discuss this and other issues (Reftel). Post will consult today and tomorrow with other Embassies and GON officials to gauge their respective postures and planned responses.

Comment

3. (SBU) The Maoists have so far refrained from attacks on the tourism industry or against foreign nationals. Post takes Bhattarai's statement seriously, as it legitimates tourist facilities as targets for his cadres. At the same time, the Maoists set a precedent last year, when they issued a threat against development agencies but never acted on it. This year they seem both more daring, and more desperate. As the April 2 start date for their general strike approaches, Post expects the level of Maoist agitation - and corresponding threat - to increase.

4. (U) Begin text of statement:

OPEN LETTER TO FOREIGN TOURISTS VISITING NEPAL

Dear Foreign Tourists,

Welcome to the country of the roof of the world, and warmest greetings from the materially poor but spiritually rich people of Nepal!

As you very well know, a revolutionary People's War (PW) under the leadership of Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) is raging in Nepal against a fascist monarchical state since February 1996. After getting severe drubbing from the heroic People's Liberation Army (PLA) in every battle front and losing almost all of the countryside to the advancing revolutionary forces, the fast crumbling reactionary regime headed by hated Gyanendra Shah has imposed brutal military dictatorship under the guise of the so-called state of emergency in the country since November 2001.

This last desperate act of the tottering regime to save its skin has already backfired on itself and the mass rebellion in the form of the PW has intensified further in recent weeks and will reach a crescendo in the coming days. It is now obvious that two states, two armies, two laws and two cultures, one representing a handful of moribund parasitic classes and the other representing the vast majority of the democratic and progressive working people, are engaged in life and death struggle in the country.

The United Revolutionary People's Council (URPC) is an embryonic Central People's Government Organizing Committee in the form of a revolutionary united front headed by the CPN (Maoist). We, therefore, deem it our duty to acquaint you with some of our basic positions and dispel some canards spread against us by the old reactionary state machinery. What are we basically fighting for?

We are fighting for a genuine people's democracy in the country. As you know, in the current political

dispensation in Nepal the real state power vests in the feudal monarchy that effectively controls the royal army, and the parliament is a mere showcase to embellish the hereditary autocracy.

Besides, the self-proclaimed current "king" Gyanendra and his son Paras are known criminal gangsters who have usurped the throne in a bloody coup d'tat against King Birendra last June 2001.

Anybody familiar with the Nepalese history will agree that the archaic institution of feudal monarchy is the root cause and bulwark of socio-economic backwardness, abysmal poverty, glaring inequality and all-round underdevelopment plaguing the country, and its abolition is a minimum precondition for ushering in genuine democracy, both political and economic, in the country.

When the English could wage war against their monarchy in the 17th century, or the French in the 18th century, or other civilized peoples in the 19th and 20th century, why can't the Nepalese people do the same even in the 21st century? And are we against tourism industry in general and foreign tourists in particular? Nothing could be farther from the truth.

We are all for making maximum utilization of the natural and cultural resources for the rapid economic development and well-being of the country and the people. And given the exquisite natural beauty and rich cultural heritage of the country, promotion of tourism obviously comes high in the priority list of the future economic development policy.

As regards the false accusations of our xenophobic inclinations and preference for a closed political system, this is another example of sinister disinformation campaigns deliberately launched by the counter-revolutionary forces. By ideological persuasion we are for the ultimate withering away of all national and state boundaries and creation of a classless and stateless global community of people. Rather the fake votaries of "globalisation" of capital are mortally against the globalisation of labor as well and hence, in essence, against genuine all-round globalisation.

Foreign tourists are, therefore, most welcome in the country and will be so in future as well. However, we would like to draw your attention to the grossly lopsided nature of current tourism industry in the country and would advise you to take special precautionary measures while traveling during the period of war.

Firstly, the tourism industry in Nepal is monopolized by the arch-reactionary Shah-Rana family and their close courtiers (for example, all the five-star hotels and most of the star hotels and travel business are either owned or controlled by them), and most of the earnings from tourism is said to flow back to foreign countries.

Therefore it is quite imperative to smash this anti-people and anti-national monopolistic structure of the tourism industry and foreign tourists would be advised not to patronize such tourism services (e.g., hotels, airlines, buses etc.) particularly owned by the hated Shah-Rana families.

Secondly, during wartime the unassuming traveler can be caught between the crossfire of the contending armies. The foreign tourists are, therefore, kindly advised not to venture into areas where active fighting is going on. They are most welcome into the revolutionary base areas, which are firmly under the control of the revolutionary forces.

And a few words to our honored guests from neighboring India. Though the reactionary state media cries hoarse about our so-called anti-India posture, you need not be unduly perturbed. Despite the conspiracy of the ruling classes of both the countries to drive wedges between the people of Nepal and India, we are conscious of the common destiny of the two peoples and are for developing a close and cordial relations between the two. You are, therefore, most welcome to visit Nepal.

And finally, in view of the 5-day long "Nepal bandh" (i.e. general shutdown) from April 2 to April 6, 2002, and the subsequent surcharged atmosphere in the aftermath, the foreign tourists are well advised to skip the tour itinerary, if any, for the said period. We deeply regret the inconveniences likely to cause to you all.

Wishing you all the best for a future visit to a democratic, progressive and prosperous people's republic of Nepal,

March 15, 2002
Yours sincerely,
Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, Convenor,
United Revolutionary People's Council, Nepal

End text of statement.

MALINOWSKI